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APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

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TITLE: **TABLE**

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TABLE

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/240,528, filed October 13, 2000, the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

5 BACKGROUND

The present invention relates generally to a table, and in particular, to a table having a unique support leg and worksurface configuration that facilitates the routing of utility lines and the like.

10 In the modern home and office environment, it has become common for various electronic devices, such as computers, telephones, lights, etc., to be stored or located on top of various tables and desks for access by a user. Conventional tables and desks, however, are not typically configured with any type of conduit for routing the necessary power lines, cables, wires and/or other utility lines required for such devices from the top of the worksurface to
15 the floor. Rather, conventional tables and desks are typically supported by one or more support legs having a solid appearance and/or configuration, and are typically constructed of metal or wood. Such support legs therefore are not generally configured to provide a conduit for the various utility lines. Rather, such lines are typically allowed to hang over one or more edges of the
20 desk, which can provide for an unsightly appearance and which can get in the way of the user when working at or around the table or desk. Moreover, conventional tables can be rather heavy and generally cannot be easily moved by a single user, especially when configured without casters.

SUMMARY

25 Briefly stated, in one aspect of the invention, one embodiment of a table includes a support leg having an elongated channel extending longitudinally along at least a portion of the support leg and opening laterally outwardly from said support leg. The channel has an open end

communicating with a top of the support leg. A catch member extends across at least a portion of the channel, and a worksurface is supported by the top of said support leg.

5 In another aspect, the support leg has an elongated channel and the worksurface has a cutout shaped to receive at least a portion of a top of the support leg with at least a portion of the channel nested in the cutout. In a preferred embodiment, the support leg includes a socket that is shaped to receive a portion of the worksurface.

10 In yet another aspect, a method of routing a utility line on a table includes providing a utility line disposed on a top of the worksurface, and running the line from the top of the worksurface into the channel formed in the support leg through the open end thereof.

15 In yet another aspect, a table includes at least four support legs, wherein at least two of the support legs terminate in casters and at least two of the support legs terminate in glides.

20 In yet another aspect, a table includes a worksurface having a rear edge, at least a portion of which has a concave contour. In a preferred embodiment, a trough is disposed along the rear edge of the table. In yet another aspect, a system of tables includes a first and second table, wherein the second table is positioned adjacent the first table with the rear edges thereof substantially abutting, wherein the portions of the rear edges having a concave contour form an opening between the first and second tables.

25 The present inventions provide significant advantages over other tables. For example, the support legs provide an ideal location to route utility lines from the worksurface to the floor or other venue. The channel provides a location to maintain the lines in an orderly configuration that improves the aesthetics of the desk, while at the same time reducing the clutter around the worksurface. In one preferred embodiment, wherein the worksurface includes a cutout, the channel can be nested in the cutout so as to reduce the overall footprint of the desk while at the same time maximizing the surface area of the worksurface surrounding the open end of the channel. Moreover, the interface

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of the worksurface with the socket of the support leg provides a strong, stable joint.

The table, whose legs are preferably made of glass-filled polypropylene, also is extremely light, and when configured in the preferred embodiment with at least a pair of casters, can be easily moved from one location to the next. In addition, when configured with a rear edge having a least a portion configured with a concave contour, an ideal location is provided to route utility lines between two or more desks arranged in a back-to-back configuration.

The present invention, together with further objects and advantages, will be best understood by reference to the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of a table.

FIGURE 2 is a side view of a support leg.

FIGURE 3 is a front view of the support leg shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 4 is a bottom view of the support leg shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 5 is a cross-sectional view of the support leg taken along line 5-5 of Figure 3.

FIGURE 6 is a cross-sectional view of the support leg taken along line 6-6 of Figure 2.

FIGURE 7 is a cross-sectional view of the support leg taken along line 7-7 of Figure 2.

FIGURE 8 is a cross-sectional view of the support leg taken along line 8-8 of Figure 2.

FIGURE 9 is a cross-sectional view of the support leg taken along line 9-9 of Figure 2.

FIGURE 10 is a cross-sectional view of the support leg taken along line 10-10 of Figure 2.

FIGURE 11 is a cross-sectional view of the support leg taken along line 11-11 of Figure 2.

FIGURE 12 is a front view of a catch member.

FIGURE 13 is a top view of the catch member shown in Figure 12.

5 FIGURE 14 is a bottom view of one embodiment of a worksurface.

FIGURE 15 is an end view of the worksurface shown in Figure 14.

FIGURE 16 is a bottom view of an alternative embodiment of a worksurface.

10 FIGURE 17 is a bottom view of an alternative embodiment of a worksurface.

FIGURE 18 is side view of an edge bumper member.

FIGURE 19 is an end view of a trough.

FIGURE 20 is a plan view of a pair of tables arranged in a back-to-back configuration.

15 FIGURE 21 is a top view of one embodiment of a worksurface core.

FIGURE 22 is a rear view of the core shown in Figure 21.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENTLY PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

20 The terms “rear”, “side”, “top”, “bottom”, “upwardly” and “downwardly” as used herein are intended to indicate the various directions and portions of the table, including the support leg and worksurface, as normally understood when viewed from the perspective of a user facing the table. The term “longitudinally” means placing or running lengthwise, and/or relating to length or the lengthwise dimension. The term “lateral” means
25 situated on, directed toward, or extending or coming from the side.

Referring to the drawings, and as best shown in FIG. 1, a table 2 is shown as including a plurality of support legs 40 (shown as four) and a worksurface 4. Two of the support legs terminate in a caster 42, while the other two support legs terminate in a glide 44. The term “glide” means any
30 structure or surface that slides or glides along a support surface, as opposed to

a structure that rolls thereon, e.g., wheels. The glide can be configured as a separate part that is connected to the bottom of the support leg, or it can be integrally formed therewith. The glide can additionally be made height adjustable to allow the table to be adjusted and/or leveled. Of course, it should be understood that the four legs could be configured with any combination of glides and/or casters, and that the illustration of two casters and two glides is meant to be illustrative and not limiting. In such a preferred embodiment, the end of the table configured with glides can be lifted, such that the end with casters can be easily moved, thereby simplifying the portability of the table.

The worksurface 4 can be configured in a number of different shapes. For example, in a first embodiment shown in FIGS. 1, 14, 15 and 21, the worksurface 4 has a generally rectangular configuration. A rear edge 6 of the worksurface is curvilinear, and preferably includes at least a portion having a concave contour. The front and side edges 10, 8 are preferably linear, although it should be understood that they too can be configured with a curvilinear contour. Each corner of the worksurface preferably has a rectangular shaped cut-out 12 forming an internal corner 14. In addition, a groove 16 extends laterally inward along the peripheral edge of the worksurface, except along the edge defining the boundaries of the cut-outs 12. As shown in FIG. 18, an edge bumper member 18 has a barbed insert 20 that is inserted into the groove. The barbs 20 prevent the bumper from being removed once installed. The bumper includes a rounded cap portion 24 having a height substantially equal to the thickness of the worksurface. The cap portion 24 includes arm portions 26 that flex when the bumper is impacted. The bumper 18 protects the peripheral edge of the worksurface while providing at the same time an decorative molding around the periphery of the worksurface. In a preferred embodiment, the worksurface further comprises an elongated stiffener 28, preferably formed as a hat section, attached to a bottom surface 30 thereof with a plurality of fasteners, adhesive or both. The stiffener 28 extends longitudinally along a portion of the length

of the worksurface and provides increased strength and rigidity to the worksurface. The hat section is preferably made of metal.

When two tables **2** are arranged in a back-to-back configuration with the rear edges **6** thereof substantially abutting, as shown in FIG. 20, the concave portion of the rear edges forms an opening **34** between the tables. The opening **34** provides an ideal location to route cables **36** as they are passed over the rear edge **6**.

In a preferred embodiment, the table **2** includes a trough **100**, shown in FIGS. 1 and 19, disposed along the rear edge **6** of the table. The trough **100** includes a flange **102** that is preferably secured to the bottom **30** of the worksurface with a plurality of fasteners. An opposite end of the trough terminates in a bead **106**, which is preferably free-floating. The trough **100** includes a plurality of longitudinally extending ribs **104** which increase the strength and rigidity of the trough. In use, the user can dispose utility lines in the trough for storage or routing as they are passed over the rear edge of the table. The term "utility line" as used herein means any electrical, data or communication line, including any wire, cable, fiber optics, or other flexible line, whether electrical, coaxial, optical or other, which is typically routed from one or more pieces of office equipment, including without limitation computers, telephones, and/or other electronic devices.

In an alternative embodiment, shown in FIG. 16, the worksurface **102** is rectangular, and substantially more square than the first embodiment. In this embodiment, the worksurface is preferably configured without a hat section. In yet another embodiment, shown in FIG. 17, a corner worksurface **202** includes parallel front and rear edges **210**, **206**, with the front edge **210** being longer than the rear edge **200**. The front and rear edges are preferably curvilinear. The worksurface **202** further includes first and second substantially perpendicular side edges **212**, **214** formed at an angle with the front and rear edges **210**, **206**. The worksurface **202** includes six cutouts **12** formed at the six junctions of the various front, rear and side edges. The

worksurface **202** further preferably includes a hat section stiffener **28** secured to a bottom surface **230** thereof.

As best shown in FIGS. 17 and 21, each of the worksurface embodiments preferably includes a core including an upper and lower 1/8 inch hardboard layer **110**. The core further includes a central rail **112** made of particle board, so as to provide a backing for the stiffener, fir rails **114**, in which the groove **116** is formed, and corner blocks **116**, which serve as a backing for the support legs, disposed between the hardboard layers. The hardboard layers are preferably roll coated with a clear acrylic melamine finish (available for example from Colledgewood in Lincoln, California) prior to it being cut and attached to the rails, preferably by bonding with an adhesive. In this way, no finishing of the table worksurface is required after assembly. The remainder of the space between the outer hardboard layers is filled with a corrugated honeycomb structure **118**. It should be understood that the various rails can be interchangeably made of fir or particle board, or of any other wood or other material.

Referring to FIGS. 1-11, the support leg **40** includes an elongated stem **46**, a top **48** and a bottom **50**. The bottom includes a stud insert **52**, which extends therefrom for attachment with the caster or glide. Of course, it should be understood that the bottom of the stem could simply rest on the floor with the bottom surface thereof serving as a glide. The top **48** of the support leg includes a support platform **54** and a socket **56** or cavity shaped to receive the internal corner **14** of the worksurface formed at each of the cut-outs **12**. The socket is defined in part by the support platform **54** and an upper flange **58**, which overlaps an upper surface **32** of the worksurface. A pair of webs extend from the stem to support the support platform.

The support leg further includes a channel **62** that runs longitudinally along substantially the entirety of the support leg. The channel **62** is tapered along its length, such that it has a greater depth at the top of the support leg than at the bottom thereof. The channel **62** terminates at a curved portion **64** adjacent the bottom **50** of the support leg. The channel **62** has an open end **66**

at the top of the support leg. When the support leg **40** is mounted to the worksurface **2**, **102**, **202**, with a portion thereof, and preferably the internal corner **14** inserted into the socket **56**, at least a portion of the channel **62** is nested in the cut-out **12**. A plurality of fasteners are used to secure the support platform **54** to the bottom **30** of the worksurface, as the fasteners engage the backing material or corner blocks **116** of the core for increased rigidity. The support leg **40** further includes a plurality of ribs **68** formed along the surface of the channel which define a plurality of recesses **70**, including a series of elliptically shaped recesses aligned axially along the channel.

The support leg further includes three pairs of openings **74** spaced along the length of the support leg. Each opening **74** is formed on one side of the channel adjacent an edge thereof. As shown in FIGS. 1, 12 and 13, an L-shaped catch member **80** includes an insert portion **82** having a catch **84** configured as a hook or barb formed on an end thereof. The catch member **80** further includes a cross member **86** extending laterally from the insert portion **82**. The insert portion **82** is inserted through the opening **74** such that the catch **84** engages a rear edge or ledge of the support leg stem **46**, with the cross member **86** extending across at least a portion of the mouth of the channel. A similar catch member **80** is inserted in the opening **70** on the opposite side of the channel, with the cross-member rotated 180 degrees such that it overlaps and nests with the first catch member. In this way, the catch members **80** extend substantially across the entirety of the mouth of the cavity to form a barrier. The catch members **80** are preferably made of a flexible polyethylene. The support leg **40** is preferably made of compression molded glass-filled polypropylene with a U.V. stabilizer added thereto. The material is preferably about 40% glass-filled polypropylene. In particular, molten polypropylene is mixed with glass fibers and extruded to form a cylindrical "shot" controlled by weight. The hot, molten shot is placed between two halves of a leg mold (not shown), which are closed under high pressure to mold the shot into the shaped support leg. The support leg is cooled and removed from the mold.

To assemble the table, the support legs **40** are installed at each of the cut-outs **72** formed in the worksurface. The bumpers **18** along each peripheral edge of the worksurface adjacent the cut-out extend into the socket **56** formed in the top **48** of the support legs. Accordingly, the bumpers **18** can be pre-cut to size and assembled on the worksurface prior to attachment of the support leg. In this way, the bumpers do not have to be trimmed to match the leg or cut-out, which simplifies the assembly process and saves manufacturing costs. In addition, the top flange **58** of the top **48** of the support leg overlaps the upper surface **32** of the worksurface as the channel **62** is nested in the cut-out **12**. In this way, the open end **66** of the channel communicates with the top of the worksurfaces and is surrounded or bounded by the worksurface. The mouth **72** of the open end **66** is curved around the periphery thereof so as to provide a smooth surface for utility lines as they pass into the channel **62**, and thereby avoids any sharp edges that can abrade the lines. Fasteners are used to secure the support platform **54** to the bottom **30** of the worksurface.

In use, various utility lines **36** are run from various pieces of office equipment **90** disposed on the upper surface **32** of the worksurface **2, 192, 292** into the channel **62** through the open **66** end thereof. The lines **36** can then be run along the channel **62** to the bottom of the support leg, where they can then be routed to another conduit on the floor, or to an outlet or other venue. The lines **36** can be passed behind the cross members **86** of the catch members **80**, which maintain the position of the lines in the channel. The lines can be pressed past the flexible cross members **86** to dispose them in the channel **62**, or they can be threaded behind the cross members **86**.

Although the present invention has been described with reference to preferred embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that changes may be made in form and detail without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. As such, it is intended that the foregoing detailed description be regarded as illustrative rather than limiting and that it is the appended claims, including all equivalents thereof, which are intended to define the scope of the invention.